



## **CARES Monthly VISN Communication Report May 2003**

The VISN-level CARES Communication Report for May 2003 is summarized on the attached spreadsheets. The first spreadsheet contains the "Stakeholder Outreach" summary; the second spreadsheet includes the unsolicited input or inquiries received from the stakeholders and others, and the third contains the substantive comments by VISNs.

In summary, there were 96,955 stakeholders, veterans, and members of the public briefed on the CARES process. This represents a decrease of 189,347 stakeholders and veterans briefed from the total briefed in April 2003. The decrease could be a result of the fact that the Draft Market Plans are under review by the National CARES Program Office and the Under Secretary for Health. For May, all VISNs submitted CARES Stakeholder Outreach information. Most of the VISNs used communication modes consisting of briefings, websites, e-mails and mailings (e.g., brochures, newsletters). Of the 27,521 Veterans & Relatives contacts, 25,398 or nearly 93% were from VISN 6 mainly in the form of newsletters, briefings and publications. Of the 62,459 Employee contacts, 12,842 or nearly 20.5% were from VISN 5. Of the 1,369 volunteer contacts, 510 or 37.3% from VISN 15. Finally, of the 4,034 VSO contacts, 997 or 24.7% were from VISN 6— mostly in the form of briefings.

Overall, of the 96,955 total stakeholders and veteran's contacts 546 (other) or nearly .6.0 % includes all outreach in the form of mail outs (e.g., e-mails, brochures, mass mailings and newsletters).

The May analysis showed that the outreach activities reported with the Affiliates, Unions, Local Organizations and DoD decreased from the previous month.

According to the Substantive comments concerns continue to be voiced in the majority of the VISNs focused on the overall CARES process (i.e., Congressional involvement, funding, accuracy of CARES data and impact), employee anxiety, potential closures, and special populations. Most of the substantive comments are coming from coastal areas (especially VISNs 20-22 – 23 and VISN 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10-18 -19). Many of the comments related to the status of the CARES hearings, mental health issues and transportation and access for the aging veteran population. In meetings with national VSO representatives at the VHA-VACO levels, a concern continues to be voiced that there has been insufficient contact to local, state, and regional VSO representatives regarding the CARES process. Town Hall meetings with stakeholders appear to be particularly effective in stimulating interest and comments from stakeholders.



Additionally, of the 96,955 total stakeholders contacts, 59 or 0.01% were face-to-face outreach contacts, and the contacts decreased from 97 in April to 59 in May

Several areas were identified in which improvements was demonstrated in the communication reporting process. These are summarized below.

- The Networks need to increase their levels of outreach. The VISNs are reminded that there is a substantial and critical need for more face-to-face contacts and more outreach to local, state, and regional VSO representatives as well as affiliates, especially now that the Market Plans have been submitted and the VSO's and stakeholders will be attending market area hearings, and reviews.
- Improvement is needed in the outreach and face-to-face discussions especially with DoD, affiliates and unions. Facility and VISN-level outreach on CARES will continue to be a priority.
- Further, our review of the substantive comments for each VISN showed an improvement in the reporting practices. Remember, VISN level staff is **reminded that any questions dealing with the analysis of the data and the planning initiatives should be completed with a response.**

June 19,2003

Distribution: 00, 00A, 10, 10A, 10B, 10N  
VHA/VACO Program Offices  
VISN Directors, Communications Coordinators  
VSO Representatives

ALL VISNs

May

2003

## Outreach Audience

VISN	Employee	Veteran/Rel	Congressional	VSO	Affiliate	Volunteer	Union	Local Org	DoD	Other	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50
1	9807	297	86	253	19	25	24	1	2	5	10519
2	2713	220	11	58	1	200	4	48	0	2	3257
3	8846	561	15	46	8	19	84	34	31	3	9647
4	964	30	15	420	11	58	10	0	0	1	1509
5	12842	179	21	431	0	10	7	12	0	122	13624
6	9221	25398	166	997	47	54	22	95	8	28	36036
7	422	147	0	498	0	0	0	0	0	8	1075
8	4673	0	1	85	0	0	0	0	0	20	4779
9	95	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	103
10	1958	173	30	24	0	80	13	4	0	25	2307
11	174	7	0	31	0	0	16	0	0	1	229
12											0
15	2118	0	5	50	0	510	11	0	0	0	2694
16	345	5	0	9	0	15	0	0	0	0	374
17	3150	0	0	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	3220
18	0	35	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	45
19	506	215	18	176	0	65	5	0	0	2	987
20	972	95	18	130	0	18	0	0	0	247	1480
21	2856	0	8	88	15	280	12	10	0	0	3269
22	253	131	8	192	0	35	0	50	0	17	686

23	544	28	6	471	0	0	3	0	0	13	1065
	62459	27521	419	4034	101	1369	211	254	41	546	96955

CARES Stakeholder Outreach

ALL VISNs May/2003

Contacts															
VISN	Employee	Veteran/Rel	Senator	Representative	VSO	Affiliate	Volunteer	Union	Local Org	DoD	State Gov	Local Gov	Media	Other	Total
0															0
1		1			1			1							3
2															0
3				1	3										4
4		1	4	3	2				1		2			1	14
5															0
6			1	1									2		4
7	2														2
8															0
9					1										1
10				1											1
11															0
12															0
15															0
16														1	1
17															0
18														3	3
19	1				2								1		4
20					1										1
21		1		1							1		3		6
22	2			3					3						8
23	3	3												1	7
	8	6	5	10	10	0	0	1	4	0	3	0	6	6	59

## Summary of Substantive Comments

For: May/2003			
Facility	Who	What they said	Action taken / Impact on plan
Beckley, WV	President, WV Marine Corps Coordinating Council	Concerned about the possibility of constructing new facility in Charleston and closing Beckley, Huntington, and Clarksburg.	As part of Market Plan, Analysis was done. Data determined that construction of new facility detrimental impact on access for veterans.
Birmingham, AL	Steve Doyle, Huntsville Times Reporter 256.532.4369	Seeking information on CARES and providing healthcare to veterans of Northern Alabama	Conducted interview and story ran on May 26, 2003, in the Huntsville Times
Clarksburg, WV	Director of West Virginia Veterans Affairs, Larry Linch	Stated he had received several invitations to attend CARES hearings in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Coatesville. Stated he could only attend one of them and wanted to know if he could ride to the hearing in June with the Director.	Director was invited to ride to the hearing in June at Highland Drive
Clarksburg, WV	Caseworker Meg Cianfrocca, Sen. Jay Rockefeller IV	Wanted to know the status of the CARES hearings, stating that they had received a couple of invitations but had heard that it may not occur in Pittsburgh as originally scheduled.	We advised that we would keep them up to date on the status of the CARES hearings dates, times, locations.
Clarksburg, WV	VFW State Commander, Melvin Reed	Stated that he had received an invitation to the CARES hearing.	None
Columbus, OH OPC	Mark Bell, Staff, Congressman Tiberi's office.	I spoke with Clare Rubadue, 740-574-2676, Congressman Strickland's office, and Mark Bell, 614-523-2555, Congressman Tiberi's office to let them know about the tentative date for the CARES Commission Hearings, 8/13/03. Mark Bell made a suggestion the Commission should make site visits to both current VAOPC and DSCC. I explained a site visit was recommended but time would dictate if this occurs. He indicated at a minimum a PP should be presented with pictures of DSCC location and why it would be a good idea to locate there. I again explained we would do what we could, maybe use the plans, and photos taken of the site and include in our presentation if time permits.	Explained I would pass request on.
Denver, CO	ECHCS employees	CARES process questions	Explanations provided
Denver, CO	Local VSOs	CARES questions	Explanations provided
Dublin, GA	Employee	Requesting Update on CARES Hearings	Info provided
Nashville, TN	Member of Joint Executive Council of Kentucky Veterans Associations	Inquiry as to status of CARES hearings	Advised more information would be forthcoming. No additional action required.
Palo Alto HCS	Stockton Record: Letter to the Editor	Article was written announcing the closure of the VA Stockton Clinic	Explained the current planning initiatives for the VA Stockton and explained the CARES process and how it will enhance health care for veterans in San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties
Palo Alto HCS	Tracy Press: Letter to the Editor	Wrote an article on the future of the VA Stockton Clinic and that it would relocate to Modesto	Explained VAPAHCS initiatives for the VA Stockton Clinic and CARES. Emphasized that health care for San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties will be enhanced through CARES.
Palo Alto HCS	Lodi News Sentinel: Letter to the Editor	Story was released that the VA Stockton Clinic would close and services would be transferred to the VA Modesto Clinic	Explained the current initiatives for the VA Stockton and explained how CARES will enhance health care services for veterans in the San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties
Palo Alto HCS	Raul Ortega Commander, American GI Forum	Did not want to see the VA Stockton Clinic merge with the VA Modesto Clinic	Explained our current initiatives for the VA Stockton Clinic
Palo Alto HCS	Assemblyman Alan Nakanishi Assembly Member, Tenth District	Would not support the closure of the VA Stockton Clinic and relocate service to a larger multi-speciality clinic in Modesto	Explained our current initiatives for the VA Stockton Clinic and explained our goal was to continue to enhance services to veterans in San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties.

Palo Alto HCS	Congressman Cardozo	Opposed the closure of the Stockton Clinic	Explained our current initiatives for the VA Stockton Clinic. Discussed CARES and how its ultimate goal is to enhance services for veteran in the San joaquin and Stanislaus Counties
Philadelphia, PA	Staffer Amy Simmerman of Congressman Andrews Office.	<p>My understanding--which I am trying to confirm for certain with the Congressman's scheduling director--is that Congressman Andrews is unable to attend the CARES hearing in Coatesville on June 19, 2003 due to responsibilities in D.C., but is very interested in preparing testimony and having a representative deliver this to the Commission in his place. We are now working on getting his testimony together.</p> <p>To this end, I was hoping you could help me locate the following information:</p> <p>1) Do we need to get the testimony to the commission before June 19/is there a deadline? Or can his rep. simply bring and read it on that day?</p> <p>2) In order to try to make the Congressman's testimony as compelling as possible, we need to find out the following and are hoping you can help:</p> <p>a) What is the current wait list/backlog at the G.C. Clinic? The last time we corresponded with Kathy Craige, I believe it was 4 mos.</p> <p>b) Do you have data you can provide to us on veteran need for approval of the clinic, regarding income levels in the G.C. area, levels of service connection compared to other regions, etc.?</p>	Information provided
Philadelphia, PA	Amy Simmerman	Office is wondering (1) if the proposal for a VA hospital in Vineland ever progressed (office saw it in the press various occasions) and (2) would that plan have and impact Gloucester Clinic CBOC proposal.	Will return call to office after seeking advise from VISN on how to respond to office.
Sheridan, WY	WY VSO	Contacted Assoc Director and CARES Communication rep to obtain clarification on vacant building numbers.	Updates and information provided.
Southern Arizona HCS	Ex-POW Meeting, in the Director's Room, 9 in attendance.	Informational only - Neutral	None info only
Southern Arizona HCS	City of Tucson - Veterans Committee, membership will given info from Veterans Newsletter - May 2003 Issue	Informational only - Neutral	None info only
Southern Arizona HCS	VSO State Representatives, VISN 18 Public Affairs Officers, and Congressional Offices. Total newsletters mailed est. 350	Informational only - Neutral CARES Initiative informational info.	None info only
VISN 20 Office	Frank Armstrong, Director of Oregon BVA Regional Group	Frank is glad that access is an important issue in Market Plans and hopes that additional attention will be given to transportation--including local transportation--for an aging veteran population with disabilities or other situations that hinder ability to get to medical centers or CBOCs.	Forwarded Frank's comment to VISN planners. Access issues will continue to be a priority in health care planning.

VISN 23 Office	VA Employee - Hot Springs	It is clear that inpatient VA services in Western South Dakota should be provided at only one facility, unless a private sector contract is used to provide those services. The most significant population of veterans in Western South Dakota live within an hour of Rapid City. The largest number of health care providers reside within an hour of Rapid City. The US Air Force Hospital at Ellsworth AFB would meet the Acute Care (only) inpatient needs of both the Western South Dakota VA and active duty military. The base parameter would need to be modified to place the Hospital outside the physical parameter of this SAC Base to improve access. The modification of the Hot Springs and Ft Meade Mission to eliminate inpatient services would allow for consolidation of a number of services, e.g., Police and fire, Facilities, Human Resources and Finance, Most of Laboratory and Advanced Imaging Services, Medical Officer of the Day 24 hour service into one Urgent Care Center in Rapid City serving VA and Military and staffed with VA and Military providers, etc. The dollars saved would more than support the inpatient acute care ser	Forwarded to SD CAMP Team for review.
VISN 23 Office	Also is Director of VA for Howard County, IA.	As the Director of Veterans Affairs for Howard County Iowa, I know the frustration veterans experience when they enroll in the VA Healthcare system. You cannot imagine their faces when I have to tell an elderly veteran and spouse that if they want to be seen in the near future, they must drive three and one half to four hours to a VA facility (Tomah, Iowa City, or Des Moines VAMC) because all the "local" sixty to seventy-five mile away drive CBOC's are full, capped, or have waiting lists. Dr. Petzel should be aware that Deb Hackman (my counterpart in Winneshiek County) and I have collected approximately 2000 signatures of veterans who would utilize a more centrally located CBOC, like in Decorah, Iowa. Granted, there always is the funding issue. However, if the VA is totally unwilling to establish a new CBOC in NE Iowa, then expansion of the La Crosse, WI, Rochester, MN, and Waterloo, IA clinics needs to be adequate to care for the significant veteran population in this area. The WWII, Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf War veterans in rural NE Iowa deserve reasonable access.	Forwarded to both IA CAMP TEAM and Network Director for review.
VISN 23 Office	Employee in Des Moines	What is CARES doing about joining forces with the States involved with VISN23 in keeping open county hospitals and clinics? Should we have a mobile fleet of Mobile Homes that visit patient to patient, especially when it dangerous for the older drivers to be out on hazardous weather conditions? If these Mobile Response Units could be funded by VA and State governments? It would be a benefit the whole area in keeping what population we do have and attract new growth?	Forwarded to CARES Steering Committee and IA CAMP Team for review.
VISN 23 Office	Employee from Des Moines	What is going to stop from all the money going to the big metro areas and leaving the rural area without sufficient funding levels? As I see it, we should join with every county hospital to provide care closest to the veteran as possible. A mobile clinic with a clerk, nurse and doctor might be helpful.	Forwarded to CARES Steering Committee and IA CAMP Team for review.
VISN 3 Office	Katherine Hrvatin, Health Policy Analyst, EPVA, Queens, NY	Ms. Hrvatin asked if I would provide the number of square feet and the proposed dollar value of the SCI Center to be sited at the Bronx in our VISN Plan.	I provided her with the information.

VISN 3 Office	Katherine Hrvatin, Health Policy Analyst, EPVA, Queens, NY	Ms. Hrvatin sent me an e-mail with a copy of the May 9, 2003 letter to Mr. Carswell outlining the EPVA's position related to VISN 2, 3 and 4's SCI proposals and their support of the VISN 3 proposal.	Circulated to existing VISN 3 SCI centers and VISN leadership for information.
VISN 3 Office	BVA	Softly expressed concern that the Commissioners were not from this area that will be holding hearings in the New York and New Jersey areas.	keep my ears open - no action taken
VISN 3 Office	Congressman Steve Buyer, HVAC, Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and Arthur Wu from Congressman Buyer's staff.	A brief overview of the CARES process was given as part of a larger briefing at the VA New York Harbor HCS (Brooklyn Campus) and the VA Hudson Valley HCS (Montrose Campus) by the facility directors.	Informational
VISN 4 Office	Cong. Frank LoBiondo, State Assemblyman Nicholas Asselta, staff from Cong. LoBiondo and Chris Smith's office, and the CEO of SJ Health care met with Mr. Biro, VISN 4 Network Director	Cong. LoBiondo discussed with Mr. Biro his interest in having a VA inpatient facility presence in S. New Jersey. He briefly discussed a specific proposal involving a facility in Vineland, NJ. Mr. Biro and the Congressman also discussed our CARES Step 4 proposal for the Eastern Market (as it related to S. New Jersey) and some data the VISN had provided to the Cong. and the CEO on the use of VA health care services by veterans in S. New Jersey.	Cong. LoBiondo indicated he would be providing a more detailed proposal for VA/VISN 4 to consider in the near future. An ROC concerning this meeting was sent to VACO. Cong. LoBiondo was also advised about the upcoming CARES Commission hearings and their availability as a forum to addressing CARES issues.
VISN 4 Office	Charles Battaglia	Called network office with questions related to VISN 4's CARES planning initiatives, as well as wanting to discuss information related to mental health issues.	Staff will follow up with Mr. Battaglia at his request.
VISN 4 Office	Individual from PADMVA called.	He received question from a state Cong. asking for confirmation that one of the three campuses of VA Pitts. Healthcare System might be closed.	Confirmed that closure of Highland Dr. campus was submitted in our Draft Market Plan.
VISN 4 Office	Representative from COVA in Pittsburgh area.	Asked if and when CARES Commission would be holding a hearing in Pitts.	None.
VISN 6 Office	Katherine Thompson	Requested information about CBOCs. Was advised about requirements/process for CBOCs and how they fit in the CARES Market Plan to improve access.	Included her field office in most recent CARES mass mailing. Also e-mailed VA Internet address for recently revised CBOC Handbook.
West Los Angeles HCS	Chief of Ophthalmology at GLA.	Submitted e-mail justification to place the Blind Rehab Center at GLA.	Provided to CARES Team for consideration.
West Los Angeles HCS	Congresswoman Diane Watson.	Whatever she can do to support GLA she will. Make sure we keep her staff updated. Will inform VSOs in her district.	We provide quarterly updates to her staff person, Lonnie Saunders.
West Los Angeles HCS	Saundra Davis, Member, Culver City Board of Education	Asked to be added to GLA community stakeholders group.	None.
West Los Angeles HCS	Jack Plimpton, Founder, Project New Hope Homeless Program in Los Feliz	Hopes the VA looks closely at what they do with the property, because he has residents that benefit from programs and services at WLA and would not want them to have to travel to other areas such as Long Beach for services.	None.
West Los Angeles HCS	Lois Hill Hale, Press Secretary for Congressman Watson	Asked that we keep her office updated.	None.
West Los Angeles HCS	Ken D. Bell, District Representative, Congresswoman Diane Watson	Asked that we keep the office updated.	None.
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Veteran from Bangor, PA interested in establishing a CBOC in that community.	Veteran wanted to know how he could provide testimony at the upcoming CARES Commission Hearing.	Name of the Mayor of Bangor, PA was provided to Network 4 as a panel member for the upcoming Hearing.
Wilmington, DE	Staff from Senator Biden's Washington office	Questions and concerns about impact on Wilmington	Answered questions, clarified issues
Wilmington, DE	Staff from the Senator's Dover office	Questions about process, any changes to the plan, and details on Commission Hearings.	Answered questions, advised that hearings have been delayed.

Wilmington, DE	Staff in the Senator's Washington office	Requesting information on number of veterans. Still concerned about outcome of process as it relates to Delaware's veterans.	Provided information as requested.
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